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Syllabus design in esp teaching

For many teachers syllabus designing is a real challenge, since 'developing new materials and activities requires time and a clear sense of why they will be used, how, and by whom' (Richards, 2006: 26).

As one of the fundamental questions for language teaching is what language is to be taught, needs analysis can help course developers identify course content that is truly relevant to the learners. ESP researchers state that ESP is an approach to language teaching which aims to meet the needs of particular learners, this means in practice that much of the work done by ESP teachers is concerned with designing appropriate courses for various groups of learners (Hutchinson & Waters, 2006:21).

In the frame of this approach learners are expected to use English within academic, or professional environments, and a key feature of ESP course design is that the syllabus is based on an analysis of the students' needs. As the syllabus is based on needs, it is to be motivating for learners. As students in ESP classes often have restricted time to learn English, it makes sense to teach them only the bits of English they need (Basturkmen, 2006:18). This requires us to collect different types of data for analysis including: course outline, statements of aims and objectives; interviews with teacher-course developers; instructional materials, lesson observations and different forms of assessment.

The main challenge we encountered was gathering the perspectives of all the parties such as the learners, institutions and teachers, and integrating into the design all the elements needed to make the teaching process effective giving one class per week. Thus the task of the ESP course developer is to identify the needs of the learner and design a course around them.

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1. Basturkmen, H.(2006), *Ideas and Options in English for Specific Purposes*, p.17, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers Mahwah, New Jersey.
 2. Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987, 2006) *English for Specific Purposes*, p.21, p.53. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
 3. Richards, J.C. (1996, 2006). *Teachers as Course Developers*, p. 26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.